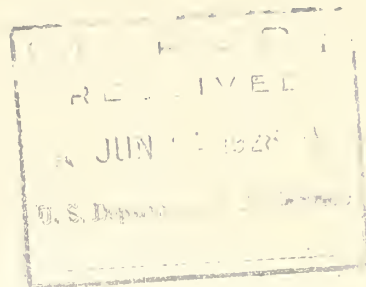


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United States Department of Agriculture
Bureau of Biological Survey



FEEDING VIXENS AND PUPS

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To obtain the best possible results from feeding foxes, a ration must be provided that is both palatable and acceptable to the animals. Furthermore, the ingredients must be easily obtainable and reasonably cheap. Cleanliness in preparation and regularity in feeding are important principles to be observed. A proper diet is an essential factor in keeping animals healthy, and thereby lessening the chances of disease. Experiments in feeding foxes have been conducted for a number of years at the Fur-Animal Experiment Station of the United States Department of Agriculture, at Saratoga Springs, N. Y., and the following rations and methods of feeding have given apparently satisfactory results:

A meat portion consists of beef, veal, and rabbit, and hearts, livers, spleens (milts), and lungs of cattle and swine. Liver, if used alone, is fed only once a week, but when given more frequently is mixed with 3 or 4 times its weight of beef or hearts. A mixture of these meats should be fed daily, but if only one kind is given at a time it should be changed at frequent intervals. All meat should be ground before it is fed. This facilitates better mixing with the other ingredients of the ration and helps to discourage the foxes from picking out the meat or burying the feed.

The following mixture is used in all of the rations:

<u>Ingredients</u>	<u>Pounds</u>
Bread--kiln-dried (ground before mixing).....	100
Shredded-wheat waste.....	100
Wheat-germ meal.....	100
Corn oil-cake meal (corn-germ).....	100
Corn-flake waste 75 per cent and meat and bone-meal 25 per cent.....	100
Fish meal.....	50
Edible bone-meal.....	50
Alfalfa meal.....	25
Iodized salt.....	5
Total.....	630

Besides cereals, this mixture also contains dried-meat products or concentrated meat substitutes, as well as substances high in essential minerals. For the sake of convenience, a 630-pound supply of this so-called cereal mixture is prepared at a time and stored in vermin-proof bins, and such quantities taken at each meal as are required for feeding

the foxes. Other ingredients of the rations, besides ground fresh meat and the cereal mixture, are one or more of the following: Milk, water, and cod-liver oil. After proper quantities of the different ingredients of a ration have been weighed, they are thoroughly mixed by stirring and the mixture promptly fed to the foxes.

RATION FOR VIXENS AND PUPS

A week after the first litter on the ranch is born, female foxes and their pups are fed twice daily. The morning feed consists of milk, 75 per cent; and cereal mixture, 25 per cent. The vixen and her pups are given 0.35 of a pound the first week, 0.37 the second week, 0.40 the third week, 0.55 the fourth week, 0.70 the fifth week, 0.80 the sixth week, 0.90 the seventh week, and 0.95 the eighth week. These weights will vary with the size of the litter and the appetites of the animals.

The evening feed consists of meat, 47 per cent; cereal mixture, 23.6 per cent; milk, 23.6 per cent; and cod-liver oil, 5.8 per cent. The vixen and pups are fed this ration as follows: First week, 0.45 of a pound; second week, 0.47; third week, 0.55; fourth week, 0.75; fifth week, 0.80; sixth week, 0.90; and seventh and eighth weeks, 0.95.

The quantity provided at each meal should be governed by the appetite of the vixen. She should be given as much feed as she will heartily clean up in about ten minutes. As soon as the pups begin leaving the nest boxes, begin feeding them the same kind of feed as that given to the mother, being sure always to give them as much as they will clean up. Young pups should be well fed to insure maximum development.

RATION FOR WEANED PUPS

The pups are generally weaned at two months of age, depending, of course, on their growth and development. They are fed twice daily after weaning, and the morning ration is the same as that given before weaning. Two-months old pups are generally started on a morning feed of about 0.3 of a pound, or such quantities as they will clean up. At two and one-half months they are given 0.32 of a pound, at three months 0.35, at four months 0.35, and at five months 0.40. The evening meal consists of meat, 50 per cent; cereal mixture, 25 per cent; and milk, 25 per cent. The pups are started off with 0.3 of a pound; at two and one-half months they are given 0.38 of a pound; at three months, 0.46; at four months, 0.50; and at five months, 0.55.

About September the ration for pups is changed, and they are fed once a day instead of twice. The new ration consists of equal proportions of meat, cereal mixture, milk, and water. From September 1 to 30 each pup receives a daily feeding of about 0.85 of a pound; and from October 1 to 30 about 0.95 of a pound.

From November 1 the pups are given once a day a ration of meat, 25 per cent; cereal mixture, 25 per cent; milk, 12 1/2 per cent; and water, 37 1/2 per cent; hot water being used on cold days. Each pup is fed an average of 0.85 of a pound a day during November and 0.7 of a pound a day during December.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

To illustrate the practical application of the foregoing information, let us take the feeding of 100 fox pups during the month of September. Each pup is to receive approximately 0.85 of a pound of feed a day. One hundred pups would thus require 85 pounds, or 21 1/4 pounds each of meat, cereal mixture, milk, and water.

After the freshly ground meat is mixed with the cereal mixture, milk, and water, it is ready for feeding.. The feed given to each fox once daily is not weighed, but the total quantity is divided among the 100 foxes. At the beginning it is best to place approximately the same quantity in each pan, until the caretaker becomes acquainted with that which usually will be eaten by each individual animal. As before stated, each fox should clean up its feed readily in a short time.

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